The Socialist Vanguard and the New Democratic Party

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Introduction

The following document was written in 1970 by Ross Dowson and entitled at the time Our Orientation to the NDP – as a strategy - and its tactical application. It both projects an orientation and at the same time outlines the history of its development and application over some three decades of experience both in the NDP, and in its precursor the CCF, by the Canadian Trotskyist movement.

At the time of writing it was the unanimously agreed upon viewpoint of the Canadian Trotskyists. It was presented in the name of the Political Committee of the League for Socialist Action/La Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière and adopted without dissent by its 1970 convention. It was not put to a formal vote solely for reason of the fact that, while it stood on the diverse work of the past and pulled it all together, it also contained considerable interpretation of history with which the quite youthful delegates could not be familiar.

In the next few years, with the ebb of the youth radicalization and its backlash on the LSA/LSO, which had as yet few substantial roots in the working class and which this orientation was designed to overcome, the LSA/LSO was shoved off its base and suffered a series of splits which in turn led to more splits. Thus today we are witness to a substantial growth in the number of persons who call themselves Trotskyists but at the same time a continued process of organizational fragmentation.

As testimony to its living significance, the document that follows becomes one of, if not the chief centre of contention as ultra-left pressures hit the Trotskyist movement, splintering almost the entire leadership that it had pulled together. Of all the various groups it is the Socialist League that has continued to stand on this document. We publish it not only because of its timeliness but in anticipation that it will help overcome the present fragmentation and place a united Trotskyist movement back on the correct path, making it the decisive factor in the continuing radicalization which is now down deep into the union movement and its political expression, the NDP.

by Ross Dowson – Toronto, ON Canada – May 1976

(Ed. Note : The date 1963 on page 17 under the subhead « Liquidationism » is in error and should read 1953, as is confirmed by the subsequent dates 1954 on page 18 and 1955 on page 20, and as confirmed by the editor, a member of the SEL by 1958.)

The Socialist Vanguard and the New Democratic Party

The revolution that is coming — that will place the working women and men of this country in full command over its vast resources, that will link it to the worldwide struggles of the working class, and lay down the foundations of the new socialist order of peace and freedom — requires a party as its organizer and director.

That party must be built along the lines of a revolutionary vanguard. Not an elitist formation of self-appointed saviors, but a party of working women and men completely dedicated to the struggle of the workers, a party of leaders of the class — a combat party armed with a revolutionary program.

No other type of party will do. History has already recorded that without such a party the revolution in an advanced capitalist country such as Canada is an idle dream.

From words to deeds

But to proclaim the need for such a party — to repeat it endlessly as some do — and to actually move effectively in the direction of building such a party are two totally different things.

Those forces that have already grasped the essential outlines of this idea are confronted with a working class movement which has already taken on a structured form. These forms have a tremendous resilience because, however inadequate, they now serve the class interests — even when they no longer do so they remain a force because of the class's historic memory of when they did.

Ever since the end of World War II the most wide-spread and profound political experience of the class has been the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and its continuator, the New Democratic Party.

For some years now the Canadian workers have been organized as a class in trade unions. The war years saw the workers in basic industry unionized and today the ranks of organized labor stand over 2 million strong.

From combating individual capitalists or alliances of capitalists over immediate economic issues such as hours, wages, and conditions, the workers have been compelled to move out onto the political arena as an independent class force against the capitalists organized as a class and through their political parties in control of the state apparatus.

The CCF, from the period 1943-48 on and now the NDP from the day of its founding in 1961, is the political party of the English-Canadian working class. It is the form that the labor party has taken in English-speaking Canada.

In Quebec, the CCF-NDP has not developed strong organic links with the trade union movement or gained a mass base among working class militants. It would appear for the whole next period at least that the nationalist upsurge has passed it by.

However, even here, to this day, the CCF-NDP has been the only political structure to pose across Quebec, however embryonically, the question of independent working class political action.

The NDP is a reformist party

The NDP is a reformist party — not a revolutionary party. While in its ranks there are forces that will come to the revolution, this party will never make the revolution nor can it be reformed to serve this purpose. It is encrusted with a leadership and a program permeated with the concepts of class peace and class collaboration, although, at the critical juncture of its formation in 1961 and for a short period after, it was what Leon Trotsky described in 1938 to us Americans as "not a party but an amorphous political mass movement" with a revolutionary dynamic. It is nationalist, identifying the fate of the Canadian working class with the fate of the central bourgeois state — and not internationalist. Its leadership has made parliamentarianism not a tactic in the struggle but the supreme principle through which change alone can come.

This party has been characterized at various times as the primary expression of the politics of the working class, as expressing the present level of consciousness of the workers, or as being in advance of the level of consciousness of the working class as a whole.

In this period of extreme national and international crises, when class antagonisms recurringly take on the most explosive character — how can one estimate with any degree of accuracy, even over a very limited period of time, where the working class is at, at what stage is its consciousness, and how firm is its adherence to various structures and to various forms of struggle.

To be sure, there are hundreds of thousands of working class men and women who do not think in terms of politics at all or continue to support one or another party of the capitalist class. They have yet to take the simplest act of a working class political character by voting NDP. There are tens of thousands of workers who have over the past years formed a firm commitment to the NDP and its leadership and will not be easily shaken from it, and to be sure there are many workers both inside and outside of the NDP who are to the left of it, who have already some understanding of the inadequacy of its

program and an even clearer idea of the opportunist and class collaborationist character of its leadership. But insofar as the revolutionary socialists have been able to confront them, there are few in number who are yet prepared to move out and beyond the NDP.

Thus the NDP represents both an opening to and a barrier against; stands both on the way and athwart the way to the building of the revolutionary vanguard. For the class as a whole over the entire past period it represents a progressive and important step forward in their political development and it will continue to do so for some period.

Touchstone of class politics

The NDP cannot be ignored and it cannot be bypassed. It is the touchstone of class politics. All working class politics revolve around it and an incorrect position on it is fatal. It is not yet its association and support for the criminal record of the Soviet bureaucracy that is the albatross around the neck of the Communist Party of Canada so much as its known record of opposition to the CCF and the NDP, to independent working class political action. The CP's opposition to the NDP has not remained in their class collaborationist theories expressed in convention but has been exposed to workers by its consistent running of blocks of candidates against the NDP and in particular against the most left candidates.

The position of the Canadian Trotskyists vis-à-vis the CCF from the time that it could be said to have become the Canadian labor party is expressed organizationally in the formation of the Revolutionary Workers Party in 1946 – an attempt to pull the necessary cadre together for a future entry; the dissolution of its public face and the entry of our forces as a disciplined democratic centralist revolutionary socialist formation into the CCF in 1952; the formation of the Toronto Socialist Educational League in 1955 (and later the Vancouver Socialist Information Centre) at a time when the CCF was static and there were new possibilities of cadre building through regroupment of diverse socialist forces; and the formation of the League for Socialist Action in 1961 to intervene in the birth processes of the New Democratic Party.

The orientation to the CCF-NDP has been the fundamental orientation of Canadian Trotskyism since World War II. In general our position in relation to the CCF-NDP labor party formation has been one of unconditional support and, but for the period of entry from 1952 to 1956, intensive fraction work with a non-split perspective.

We say unconditional in the sense that our defense of the USSR is unconditioned – that we lay down no terms or conditions to the Soviet regime to warrant our defense of the USSR itself. We defend the USSR as a workers state – should a series of transformations take place as to qualitatively alter its class character we would cease to defend it. But suppose the NDP violates some of the most basic interests of the working class. The Labour Party of Great Britain through Wilson completely underwrote the U.S. genocidal war against the people of Vietnam and imposed a wage freeze on the British unions. This caused some to reject electoral support of the Labour Party and even to cease to characterize it as the labor Party – the mass political expression of the British working Class – but to define it as a bourgeois party.

It is not at all excluded that the NDP could move to such positions. We would not support such positions. But at what point would we say that we no longer support the party – at what point is it no longer the labor party? Only when it ceases to represent in the eyes of the class the alternative to the parties of the bourgeoisie. In our opinion the betrayals of the British Labor Party leadership have not had such an impact as to result in a qualitative change in the party's relation to the class.

On another occasion we commented this way: the NDP not only betrays the basic principles of socialism, which it does not even claim to ascribe to, but even from time to time the most elementary interests of the workers. But it has not betrayed the level of consciousness of any substantial and viable layer of the working class.

Opposition to orientation

Our CCF-NDP orientation and its effective application has been the hardest fought position in the history of the movement, established against trends of centrist conciliationism and liquidationism into the NDP, sectarian opposition to, and in more recent years, spontaneist and adventurist hostility to it, leading to defection from the revolutionary vanguard itself.

This rejection of the labor party flows from the same basic illusion touched on by The New Rise of the World Revolution adopted by the Third World Congress since Reunification. It explained: "The sudden development of the new youth vanguard into a mass movement has caused the resurgence of the worship of spontaneity. This is another new obstacle to a breakthrough by revolutionary Marxists." Earlier the document referred to an incorrect interpretation of united action as follows: "The success of such actions is indispensable to victory in specific episodes in the class struggle. But our historic task is not just to achieve episodic victories; it is to lead the working class to victory by overthrowing the international capitalist system and capitalism in each individual country. If we limited ourselves solely to united actions, we would run the risk of a general defeat in the wake of episodic and ephemeral successes. This would more and more sap the potential for further successes, because what is most necessary to achieve such successes is a correct theoretical and practical grasp of reality, which is unattainable without the incomparable instrument of a revolutionary party.

"Such conceptions," the document continues, "are based implicitly or explicitly on the illusion that thousands of students or young workers fighting shoulder to shoulder against the Vietnam war, for a 'confrontation' with the bourgeois university or even capitalist society as a whole, have already reached the same ideological level as the revolutionary Marxists and that therefore a revolutionary Marxist party and International are no longer necessary."

This spontaneist tendency arising with the worldwide youth radicalization has rejected the NDP out of the same logic. Because the youth radicalization has as yet developed apart from the NDP, because its massive united actions do not look to the NDP for leadership, they conclude that the NDP has been definitely bypassed, not merely by

the thousands of students and young worker participants in mass demonstrations, but by the class as a whole.

This tendency which *(Al)* Engler and *(Brian)* Slocock gave expression to in our movement, saw our fundamental orientation, the identification of the LSA/LSO with the NDP, as a barrier to our effective identification with and full involvement in the new wave of radically developing youth. They saw our identification with the NDP as giving us a conservative image and as an impediment that had to be got rid of, while we see it as increasing our political effectiveness. We see such slogans as "Win the NDP to Socialism," through which we express our NDP orientation, as giving depth and direction to the radicalization, as a means to direct the youth militants to a comprehension of what class it must link its struggle to – the working class – in order to render it more effective, as a means to raise and educate youth militants in class politics. Our spontaneists saw the struggle continuing to move outside of the NDP, and the revolutionary wave completely bypassing the NDP.

Interestingly enough, this view did not find them more vigorously proclaiming the "pure" Trotskyist program and seeking on every occasion to more dramatically present the independent banner of the LSA/LSO or the Fourth International, but on the contrary adapting to spontaneist elements, taking a completely opportunist course, and rejecting the revolutionary vanguard party first in the concrete, insofar as it existed in the LSA/LSO, and then in theory.

Slocock cautioned us about not imposing an artificial and abstract mass perspective on the spontaneous development of the majority of antiwar militants, and advised us that our attitudes to such new formations as tenant organizations, COPE (Vancouver electoral popular front) should not be determined by our NDP orientation, but each case must be decided on its own merits (page B, Bulletin 1). It was just two years ago, with great erudition and endless analogies, he predicted that the radicalization of the working class will not be reflected into the NDP through the constituency organizations, but through the trade union movement. Work in the constituencies and through artificially erected "Socialist caucuses" is of little value, he declared.

Needless to say the new radicalization has by no means bypassed the NDP but has been reflected within it, not only In constituency organizations and union locals but In the federal convention and even the parliamentary caucus.

While the NDP leadership has taken no real initiatives to involve the party in the anti-Vietnam war movement and for a whole period savagely attacked those who did, its top leaders now grace the platforms of the mass rallies, head the demonstrations, and through their actions identify the NDP with them, and carry the NDP into the antiwar movement. While the Canadian Party of Labor (Maoists) came to the VMC-sponsored march on Ottawa this spring all geared to boo and heckle the major speaker, the notorious right-wing NDP leader David Lewis – they had to keep their silence. Lewis forthrightly attacked U.S. aggression against the Vietnamese revolution as imperialist, condemned the

Canadian government for its abject material and political complicity and demanded the cessation of arms sales and the withdrawal of U. S. troops from Vietnam now.

What about women's liberation—the most ongoing struggle involving new layers of radicals with the most explosive potential? When the abortion caravan hit Ottawa it found immediate support from the NDP parliamentary caucus. MP Grace Mclnnis firmly identified the NDP with the caravan by addressing the rally that welcomed its arrival. Liberationists chained themselves to the parliamentary gallery and so interrupted the session with their demands for immediate action that the government was forced to adjourn this sacred institution of bourgeois democracy. Some of the party leaders dissociated themselves from this action but others appeared amongst the Liberationists in a gesture of support. The *(Dr. Henry)* Morgentaler case around which the fight for "Free Abortions Now" is developing has firm support from the NDP.

The NDP leadership have proven sufficiently flexible in meeting the challenge of the new wave of radicalization to preserve the image of the party as a party of the left.

It is difficult to prove the effect of much of our work at any given moment and sometimes for a whole period on the course of events. Often, when it would seem that it had little or none whatsoever, later developments prove quite the opposite. For an extended period, we concentrated considerable effort in the NDP across Canada, in B.C., Alberta, Ontario, etc., to build socialist caucuses. Slocock characterized them as being "artificially erected" and "of little political value." But scarcely were the words written than there appeared in the NDP right across the country the so-called Waffle – a broad left-wing formation composed largely of radical anti-imperialist youth with 1/3 of the votes at last year's federal convention and which has since become a stable left-wing force across the country.

Revolution by the class

Spontaneists and confrontationists see the NDP as taking steam out of and tending to divert the militancy of the struggle into parliamentary and reformist channels. But isn`t this really just another expression of their lack of understanding of or unwillingness to face up to the fundamental problems of making the revolution? The revolution cannot come out of the confrontation-escalation politics of the Spontaneists no matter how dramatically or how brilliantly their actions are planned. The youth radicalism has to link up with the working class with their vast numbers strategically enmeshed in the working gears of society. In the United States it is difficult for student radicals to see the working class as a class, let alone as a potentially radical force - hence there has been considerable dissipation of their forces in ultra-leftist adventurism.

In the United States where there is no labor party this by no means indicates a lack of reformist illusions - quite the contrary. They are not on the plane of whether socialism can be won by parliamentary means, but on a much lower plane – whether one

or another capitalist party can be an instrument for social change. By that token alone, they tend to be parliamentarist. Whereas the NDP is a minority, often hamstrung by electoral trickery and parliamentary procedures, actions identifying with it often take on an antiparliamentary character and pose revolutionary challenges.

In Canada the revolutionary potential of the working class is much easier to grasp. Not only are the workers organized in unions but their unions are much more socially oriented; they are heavily involved in the NDP with its broad social outlook. In fact, the unions are the dominant force in the NDP. The NDP constantly poses the need for working class power. Since it is a minority party and must continually seek to widen its support, it is necessary for it to move out in protest demonstrations and rallies to continually sharpen the discontent of the workers and organize them along political, even if reformist, lines.

And history records more than one occasion when the struggle has transcended from one for reforms to revolution.

Cannot be by-passed

Insofar as we Trotskyists recognize the NDP as a progressive step forward for the working class, in that sense, indirectly, it can be said we help to establish it. But the fact is that the NDP is there, is a tremendous reality and it plays that role completely outside of our support and even our existence. And revolutionists who do not have an orientation to it cannot get anywhere.

This has been clearly brought home recently by the demise of the Saskatchewan-based Committee for a Socialist Movement – a broad catchall organization at its peak of some 200 revolutionaries outside the NDP. In the short year and a half of its existence it has known nothing but crises over its direction. What blew it up were differences that developed around its orientation to the New Democratic Party and its left-wing Waffle caucus. The first split was when some 20 key leaders, largely in Regina, pulled out to work exclusively in the NDP and Waffle. The next split was the leadership of the Saskatoon Group, who opposed attacks on the Waffle appearing in the CSM paper. They viewed the NDP as a labor party and were for working within it for a socialist program –
although they consider it necessary to go beyond the NDP and Waffle. They have joined the Young Socialists. What remained split again, the first group, named by its advisor and our erstwhile comrades *(Al)* Engler and *(Jean)* Rands "The Middle Way," seeks a way outside the NDP and the policy outlined by Trotskyists. The second talks of armed struggle and rejects the NDP on completely sectarian grounds. Both are by now quite probably scattered to the winds.

In no way does our orientation to the NDP distort or inhibit the full responsible functioning of the LSA/LSO as the nucleus of the revolutionary vanguard. Not only does it link it up to the most significant expression of the class conscious development of the Canadian working class, permitting it to go through the experiences of the class with the

class, testing our ideas, allowing us to take every advantage of every developing possibility but it makes our movement and our aim, the Canadian socialist revolution, take on a much more comprehensible character.

Our orientation to the NDP has nothing but good results for us. We described it this way in our 1963 convention resolution:

"The LSA's orientation to the NDP makes it much more attractive a force than it would otherwise be. Our orientation places our whole program in a realistic framework. Regardless of all its shortcomings, in its overall significance the NDP projects the need for working-class power. The fairly extensive layer of workers who in advance of their class, have already a generally correct assessment of reformism, find a small revolutionary socialist group unattractive – even though they may concede that it is theoretically correct – for it can offer little immediate possibilities of struggle. Their understanding therefore becomes largely passive, without perspective. Our orientation to the NDP, our projection as a socialist caucus, with the aim of winning the NDP to a socialist policy makes us much more attractive and more capable of winning such forces to our side. The merits of our orientation from this viewpoint, which stand completely outside of what forces we may or may not actually have in the NDP at any given moment, must not be overlooked. Our NDP orientation places our forces, small and involved as they are in what is largely education work of an even academic character, in their proper perspective. It projects in broad lines the direction and possibilities of the struggle in the whole next period, thus heightening immensely our attractivity."

That orientation to the CCF-NDP which has been our strategical line since the end of World War II, has been mistakenly characterized by some as entrism. In reality, while within the framework of the orientation the Canadian Trotskyists have implemented a wide range of tactics, only on two occasions has the Canadian movement carried out entry.

What is the entry tactic? Entrism, in general, means the revolutionary vanguard dissolving itself as an open independent organization under its own banner into another non-Trotskyist organization for a period. While it is normal that Trotskyists should have their own open movement propagating their full program, under certain circumstances (in order of course to add forces to the revolutionary vanguard) it is a justifiable tactic to take down the independent banner to permit a full entry into another organization.

In Canada a group that had earlier split away from our movement to form the League for a Revolutionary Workers Party, associated with a U. S. group around a B. J. Field, added this to their bag of differences with our movement claiming that, contrary to us, the public independent party had to be sustained at all times and under all circumstances as a matter of principle.

There are of course many dangers facing Trotskyists who have entered another

centrist or reformist movement. The internal cohesion of Trotskyists who enter, must, if anything, be even greater than it is as an independent public force. In essence Trotskyists become a hardened cadre caucus fighting to win new recruits to the full program of Trotskyism in order later to reestablish themselves as the independent public vanguard organization.

Our first experience in applying this tactic was the entry into the CCF during 1936 which was sharply and decisively ended in 1938. It was of the classic type devised by Leon Trotsky, sometimes called the French turn, and most successfully applied by the U. S. Trotskyists. In the mid-thirties a leftward-moving current developed in the Socialist Party of the U. S. The American Trotskyists dissolved their public face, gave up their own public press (soon to be replaced by another press), fused with the main forces in this current and then after a sharp struggle reconstituted their independent movement on a considerably expanded basis, at the same time dealing a political opponent a blow from which it never recovered.

The other entry was carried out by the Canadian Trotskyists over a period of three and a half years commencing in 1952 at approximately the same time as the International Executive Committee of the FI headed by Michel Pablo projected a concept of entry *sui generis* (“of a unique type”) on an international scale and of an extended duration. This entrism, which was practiced by almost all the European sections of the movement either into Stalinist or social democratic labor parties, was only terminated after almost two decades by the new wave of radicalism that broke over the movement in the late sixties and was the subject of a resolution prepared by the majority of the United Secretariat that appeared in International Bulletin No. 7. May 1969.

The second entry conducted by the Canadian Trotskyists had little or nothing in common with entry *sui generis*, certainly as Pablo, through his Canadian supporters, came to interpret it. The Canadian entry was terminated after a relatively short span of three and a half years after an incisive split carried out by a minority. Commencing the entry apparently in agreement with the majority as to its nature, this minority came to give a totally different interpretation of it which they claimed was Pablo's. Pablo subsequently recognized them as the Canadian section prior to their complete liquidation into the reformist milieu and disappearance from the political scene.

The second entry was ended with the expulsion of the main Trotskyist forces in the East from the CCF, the formation of the Socialist Educational League and the publication of *Workers Vanguard*. Ever since then, the Canadian Trotskyists have maintained an open Trotskyist organization with public organs ─ today four ─ and have carried a wide range of independent activities ─ all within the framework of our CCF-NDP orientation ─ unconditional support of the NDP with an extensive fraction within it.

In the resolution dealing with our work in the NDP which was adopted by our 1966 convention, we described the implementation of our orientation as follows: "It means that the NDP remains the focus of all our politics – but not the center of our activities" – that center was the new wave of youth radicalization.

The United Front

How to establish the hegemony of the revolutionary socialists over the left? An initial tactic devised to achieve this was the united front. Lenin devised this tactic following the failure of the Communist International to win important sectors of the workers within social democracy to the banner of the Communist parties. The united front was designed to effect unity in action of Communist Party and Social Democratic Party workers on issues of common concern. The parties would march together while retaining their separate identity. Through such a device the greatest possible striking power would be brought into play against a common enemy. At the same time it was anticipated that the Communist Parties would effectively demonstrate the superiority of their ideas and their party, win the best workers from the social democracy, and thus establish their hegemony over the entire left. The tactic of the united front remains one of the most precious tools in the arsenal of revolutionary politics

The tactic of entry was first carried out by our French comrades in 1934. It was predicated on the fact that our own forces were weak and isolated, and that an important and viable left wing in the social democracy was developing in our direction. They joined the social democratic party as a body, in order to work within it as a fraction to come in contact with its left wing, to influence it, and to fuse with it, and thereby broaden the basis for the subsequent construction of a new revolutionary party – a Trotskyist party – in France.

Concept of entry

The first entry carried out by the Canadian Trotskyists was in 1937 into the CCF which we characterized even as late as 1946 as "predominantly an agrarian social-democratic party with its primary base in the prairie radicalism of the western farmers ... its membership in the major industrial cities of the East primarily middle class with a small sprinkling of highly skilled workers. The forces of Canadian Trotskyism were limited almost entirely to Vancouver and Toronto. The Vancouver comrades had earlier proposed entry into the BC section of the CCF to the executive committee. The matter was now discussed through the movement and they took that action independently. Then in the summer of 1937 the executive committee majority submitted a one-line resolution to the party – resolve that the executive committee endorse immediate entry into the CCF. A minority replies that the CCF was stagnant and declining and that there was no left wing that could be won to our ideas. After a long and extremely bitter conflict, the organization convention, by a very small majority, voted to enter the CCF. No sooner had the motion been carried than almost the entire top leadership headed by Jack Macdonald, apparently exhausted by the years of isolation and grueling struggle, stood aside. Maurice

Spector, the other leading figure in the movement, had already led Canada to work in the U. S. party where he lined up with A.J. Muste against entry into the Socialist Party. The entry was thrown into the laps of young and quite inexperienced comrades and its conduct was further complicated by the failure of much of the minority (who were actually a majority of the movement's activists) to participate. just these circumstances alone guaranteed that entry would threaten the movement with liquidation.

Not only did this entry prove fruitless in so far as bringing new blood into our movement, but the conditions and atmosphere in the CCF infected our own forces. Many comrades became demoralized and dropped away, some even became completely acclimatized to the reformist milieu.

It was not until late in 1938 that the remnants of the entrists and non-entrists with the aid of the International, became reconciled and the entry was terminated. Our weakened forces reconstituted themselves as the Socialist Workers League, but before they could consolidate and renew their national connections the Second World War broke out and the movement was driven underground. The Canadian movement, unlike our co-thinkers in Britain and the U. S. who were able to function openly with only modest adjustments, was driven underground by sweeping repressive legislation.

In November, 1944 a Canada-wide conference was held in Montreal that pulled together our forces and prepared the organization of the Revolutionary Workers Party two years later. Even as we reconstituted this nucleus of the vanguard as a public independent party, we did not by any means reject the possibility of being faced again with the necessity of re-entering the CCF in our struggle to build the mass revolutionary party. On the day of its formal organization the RWP took a CCF orientation - fraction work in the CCF but with major emphasis on building the independent party. Without this necessary preliminary pulling together of cadres, a subsequent entry into the CCF was inconceivable.

In 1943 the delegates to the convention of the Canadian Congress of Labor, formed in 1940 through unification of the All Canadian Congress of Labor and the Canadian section of the CIO, voted to endorse the CCF as the political arm of organized labor. By 1948 it became obvious that the CCF had not only taken on important strength but had sunk real roots in the working class areas in all the major metropolitan centers and had become – in effect – the labor party.

With that the movement made CCF fraction work a more serious part of party work and raised the question of the advisability of carrying out an entry into the CCF. Commencing in 1948, the leadership began to prepare the movement for possible entry. Thus we come to the second entry carried out by the Canadian Trotskyists. At that time the IEC headed by Pablo was projecting entry *sui generis* in the major sectors of the globe.

How did the Canadian Trotskyists see their entry? Unlike many other periods in the history of the Canadian movement, this one is fairly well documented. The major document unanimously adopted by the 1951 convention is entitled "The CCF – Our Tasks and Perspectives" and that is exactly what it is: a detailed analysis of the CCF, and the challenge it poses for the Trotskyists in their struggle to build the revolutionary vanguard.

This document differentiates the entry that it projected from the type of entry known as the "French turn." Its premise was "not the existence of left formations – nor an increase in internal democracy in the party or a wave of growth." Its premise was that the CCF has now all the skeletal forms of the labor party, and that while we have gathered some precious cadre – we are small. We projected that in this period of extreme national and international tension, of McCarthyism and the cold war that "the CCF under the next upsurge," we projected, "will embrace the class. The class will go there and nowhere else; there it will undergo the experience of reformism - and there, given the perspective of world and Canadian capitalism will move forward to the revolutionary solution of its problems." And we said: "The struggle for a program that will express the opposition of the masses to the oppressive burden of the war and the encroachment of the Bonapartist state will thrust up a new leadership that will do battle with the Coldwell-Douglas-Millard leadership. The program, we stated very clearly, "will be the transitional program of the Fourth International; the leadership," we underscored, "will be the Trotskyist leadership of the Canadian revolution." That is, the only alternative to the reformist leadership was Trotskyism.

This discussion brought to a close, at least on the surface, a longstanding, wearing struggle that had developed in the Toronto branch with an unprincipled personal clique formation headed by Joe Rose. This clique had only in June 1951 finally put its political views down on paper – they then denied that the CCF was the mass political party of labor and formally counterposed the concept that the genuine left would only develop through the trade unions. At the convention they suddenly switched, voted for the entry, and Rose was put on the Central and Political Committees.

By March 1952 our B.C. forces publicly announced their entry without prior consultation with the P.C. In the East as we began to implement the entry, the Rose clique began to develop widening differences. Veering wildly from their previous sectarian evaluation of the CCF they moved, not to the majority position of long-term entry, but toward liquidation into the CCF milieu. They became super-security-conscious, refusing to support the application for membership of a comrade in a CCF club in which they held membership. Finally, using as an excuse the readmission of a former member in the movement, who they claimed was a security problem and whose case went before the Control Commission where it was cleared, they walked out apparently in order to protect their own security in the CCF.

The Rose group, and those who later joined it, postulating the need to remain in the CCF "at all costs," were unable to undertake any serious left-wing initiatives, fearing that challenges to the party's right-wing establishment might provoke disciplinary reprisals. The majority, on the contrary, moved out in aggressive actions to build the CCF left and expand the Trotskyist forces. While it was felt necessary to drop our public press, we made a big effort to stimulate the BC leftists to launch with us a journal for the broad left, we were instrumental in the publication of a rash of constituency bulletins popularizing transitional demands, and our American co-thinkers allocated space in their press which we commenced to promote. We developed bookstores that carried all the publications of the Trotskyist movement, we held public forums in Toronto which utilized our comrades who had been refused membership in the CCF – and we ran candidates for public office. We made every effort to carry on with the key work of recruiting and developing Trotskyist cadre.

Liquidationism

Rapidly the dispute which resulted in the split of world Trotskyism into two tendencies grouped around the International Secretariat and the International Committee which was healed only in 1963, broke over our heads. The Canadian leadership was totally unacquainted with these developments until it read Comrade Cannon's "Open Letter to Trotskyists" published in *The Militant*. It was an appeal to the worldwide movement to unite in a struggle against Pablo's revisionism. The Vancouver comrades immediately identified themselves with the "Open Letter." The leadership in Toronto equivocated in the belief that the issues at dispute could be discussed and decided upon at the next world congress.

It was then that a minority in the leadership and in the Toronto branch headed by Fitzgerald and McAlpine commenced to give a new interpretation to our entry – one that had never figured in any of the discussions and documentation that had decided the entry. Their arguments developed the need for entry along the following lines: 1) that the Third World War was thundering down on us, 2) that we would enter into this war with the present alignment of forces on the left – the Communist party, Social Democratic and labor parties - substantially as they are now, 3) that the Trotskyist forces woefully small must at all costs enter as rapidly as possible the Communist Party or Social Democratic/labor party, whichever was the effective movement of the working class in their respective countries, 4) that we could be confident that out of the impact of the world holocaust on these parties the revolutionary instrument would be forged, with our forces playing a contributory role.

Entry *sui generis* ***("of a unique type")***

To question these broad and sweeping generalizations, to suggest that the timetable might be inaccurate, that events could take place that might drastically alter paths that the traditional parties of labor might well go through, some crises that would open up new roads for Trotskyism, was dismissed or ridiculed as holding on to old concepts as not

facing up to the new reality. We were even violating the position of the Third World Congress, we were told, which we had voted for without any criticism but which we were only now informed had such concepts unknown to us and not brought out to our attention at the time but firmly imbedded in them.

Suddenly on Jan. 25/54, to the embarrassment of the minority, the Rose clique bounced back into the arena with a Committee for a Socialist Regroupment. They appeared as 100% opponents of the Cannonite majority 100% supporters of Pablo and called for a split in Canadian section. The minority and Pablo himself in a letter to the leadership dissociated themselves from the split.

But among the resolutions and documents of the 14th plenum held by the IS headed by Pablo was one decreeing the suspension from membership in the International all members of the IEC who support the "Open Letter" who approve it and who are trying to rally on this basis the sections of the International. It ordered the suspension from their posts of leadership in the sections all those who signed these appeals or approved them.

This ukase handed to the leadership of the Canadian Trotskyist movement to enforce was immediately operative against Ross Dowson, a member of the IEC, executive secretary and member of the CC-PC, and against Reg Bullock of the CC. Dowson had come to identify himself with the "Open Letter." If taken seriously as intended it would have decapitated the movement at one blow - placing the minority in control. The minority abstained, but not before stating their complete agreement with it and expressing regret that due to the nature of our party, because of its political level, this instruction was inoperative.

While it was clear where the Canadian Trotskyists stood, preparations were made for a convention. Suddenly on April 7, the Rose clique, along with a few other drop-outs, applied for restoration of their membership in the section. The Toronto branch voted to table the matter until after the convention called for April 10 and 11. The minority, demanding immediate acceptance, stormed out of the meeting. A day or so later a letter dated April 8 appeared entitled "The Canadian Section of the Fourth International to Carry On." It was signed by Fitzgerald, McAlpine and Grenier and announced an emergency conference for April 11 "to continue the Canadian party with all those who support the International" and to "name a temporary executive committee and a delegate to the 4th World Congress."

This rump "Conference of the Canadian Section" publicized the fusion of the Fitzgerald-McAlpine splitters with the Rose clique. Their interim NC among other strange flowers numbered in its circle one Comrade Houston, whose readmission into the section had earlier served as the pretext for the Rose clique desertion from the movement.

Fitzgerald attended the "Fourth World Congress" as the recognized delegate of

"the Canadian section of the Fourth International." Before completely disappearing from the scene this assortment of splitters and deserters gave a further lesson in their interpretation of entry *sui generis.*

Suddenly almost every Trotskyist who had managed to enter the Ontario CCF found himself charged by the CCF brass with being a member of an opponent political party. As it turned out, having once started out on a liquidationist course, the rump section's alternate NC member Houston carried it further by turning informer to the CCF brass. A little later, full NC member Rose carried their entry to its ultimate. When appearing before the investigators Rose went state's evidence for a promise that his membership might later win favorable consideration.

Was the liquidationist course to be explained away as the aberrations of disoriented individuals? When the Rose clique's call for split characterized the schism in the world movement as being between those who "are still applying the formulas of the thirties which because of the new world realities have become empty clichés" when it said: "In the words of the IS 'let the dead bury its own,' only the living can make an effective contribution to the victory of Canadian socialism," and its previous position of carrying out the entry "at all costs," it was only echoing Fitzgerald and McAlpine's words about facing the new world realities, about grasping the new Trotskyism. But what role did Trotskyists have to play at all in Pablo's war-revolution concept which was automatic and irreversible?

For its major forces which were concentrated in the East the second Canadian entry was terminated by the expulsion of almost its entire entered forces in the CCF. The Socialist Educational League was launched publicly in December, 1955 with new elements who had been won in the course of the anti-expulsion fight who constituted an effective fraction in the CCF with a no-split perspective.

However, it is apparent that regardless of the expulsions, the forces of Canadian Trotskyism, in order to meet the challenge of events that were already developing, would have ended the entry in the next year or two This is clear from the character of their activities over the next five years, the struggle along with the Vancouver comrades against a liquidationist current that developed in their branch, and the formation there of the Socialist Forum in February 1959, later the Socialist Information Center, and finally its fusion with the Toronto-based SEL under a common name – the League for Socialist Action.

In its evaluation of the entry *sui generis* held over from the Third World Congress Since Reunification in the International Information Bulletin May 1969, the United Secretariat referred to the "conjunctural factors" that were particularly cited in the debates at the time it was first projected in the early fifties, and to "the structural factors" that were emphasized when the tactic was being applied.

The resolution states: "(7) The citing of conjunctural factors proved some time later to have been in error, the economic perspective turning out to be completely the reverse and giving to a prolonged favourable cycle, the danger of war postponed. On the other hand the crisis of Stalinism developed considerably faster than had been visualized." Nonetheless this entry as practiced by several sections ended only as the impact of a turn marked as being around 1966 (as the new wave of youth radicalism broke over them) led them to alter their tactics in this field. According to Comrade Pierre Frank in his report on entrism "this tactic was and proved itself to be the one possible for a whole period."

Even today, 19 years after, the 1951 convention document's broad projection for the CCF-NDP entry remains accurate. The workers as a class are going through an NDP experience – it is only taking longer than we expected. For Bolsheviks that time is precious time indeed as it gives us new opportunities to accumulate and develop cadre which is absolutely essential if we are to take advantage of the favorable turn of events to make a revolution.

And already by December 1955, when they had been expelled from the CCF and had set up the independent Socialist Educational League with its press the *Workers Vanguard*, the Canadian Trotskyists were feeling the pressure, the need to free themselves from the restraint that long-term entry tended to impose.

Two months after the public appearance of the SEL came the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its revelations of the crimes of Stalin, followed shortly by the uprising in Poznan *(the Polish workers' anti-Stalinist Solidarnosc movement–ed.)* and then the Hungarian revolution. The Communist parties throughout the world underwent a profound crisis. In Canada the entire Quebec leadership split away, followed shortly by the defection of nearly all its public figures save Tim Buck. How could the Trotskyists, entered in the CCF, meet this challenge?

Within the orientation

The CCF leadership began to shuck off every last remnant of socialism symbolized by the ''Regina Manifesto'' as they cleared the way for the launching of the NDP with the newly united CLC. The dumping of the ''Manifesto'' set off centrifugal forces throughout the CCF. Prominent BC left-winger Rod Young announced the formation of a new socialist party. How could entered Trotskyists block this dissipation of forces? Regroupment becomes a matter of great interest in socialist circles' – how could Trotskyists, entered in a movement from which many of these forces were decamping, participate? Not only did the war not come, but a powerful antiwar movement commenced to develop, particularly among student youth, the first expression of the student radicalization that was to gather momentum through the '60s. The Cuban masses under Fidel and Che took power and offered a new pole of attraction on the left.

Obviously entry was becoming increasingly insufferable. The SEL moved out, within the framework of its CCF orientation, but quite prepared to risk the security of its CCF fraction, for it needed every force at its disposal. We moved right in on the CP, circulating literature discussing and challenging their line. In front of a mass membership meeting we forced CP leader Tim Buck himself to agree to a public debate (which of course never came off). We initiated a series of regroupment forums with the ex CPers in Montreal. We launched an independent Toronto Socialist Youth Forum. As the CCF was being played down prior to the launching of the NDP we entered a candidate in a Toronto federal riding in 1958 where a token CCF candidate was in the running. When the CCF made a no-contest deal we went into the Hastings-Frontenac by-election to challenge the Minister of External Affairs for his seat. We consolidated youth contacts gained in the antiwar and labor party youth movements by launching in 1960 an open and independent Trotskyist youth organization, the Young Socialists. We moved out to popularize the Cuban cause and launched the Fair Play for Cuba Committee.

These initiatives were not taken without meeting some resistance within our own forces. In the Vancouver branch an opposition clique developed around Bill Whitney. Only for a short period had the Vancouver comrades had the opportunity and the responsibility of defending the full program of Trotskyism particularly in its highest form of expression, the building of a vanguard, in contest with all other political tendencies. They had been deprived over an extended period of time of that condition that is normal and healthy for the full development of revolutionary socialists. Like the prisoners in the cages of Vietnam's Thieu they had been long cramped up and some such as Whitney lost the use of vital faculties. To this day Whitney is an able articulator of many of the basic theoretical concepts of Trotskyism but he is hopelessly crippled with liquidationism.

After many long and tortuous discussions where agreement was made to terminate the BC entry, which never seemed to get implemented, Whitney became isolated, the branch moved out and he broke. In February 1959, the Vancouver Socialist Forum was launched through Malcolm Bruce and Fred McNeil, former top leaders of the CP who had come to our side.

Cadre gathering

It was in this period that we gathered the key cadre for the next big opportunity that the CCF, to become the New Democratic Party, faced us with. The situation was without precedent. The Canadian Trotskyists were confronted with the challenge of being in on the birth of a new mass labor party formation. The next turn proved that through the hectic and trying struggles of the previous decades we had laid true and sound foundations under ourselves, that we had developed valuable cadre.

No revolutionary opportunity, no matter how profound, produces its own cadre. At best it only provides the culture where its elements can begin to flourish and coalesce as cadre for the next upsurge; or the opportunity for cadre that has already been formed in a previous struggle to intervene and transform itself and move forward to victory. We proved in the crucial period of 1957-63 that we had gathered together invaluable forces, that we had assimilated the program of the revolution, and that we had learned how to

implement it—its politics. But we had not had time to accumulate sufficient cadre. It is this that is the ongoing and supreme challenge before the Canadian and world Trotskyist movement.

In 1955 with the merger of the Trades and Labor Congress - American Federation of Labor to the Canadian Congress of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations which had endorsed the CCF as labor's political arm since 1943, new opportunities opened up to widen the bases of support for independent labor political action. The CCF brass saw it as a chance to broaden they apparatus and to rid themselves of a broad left wing concentrated largely in the Prairie provinces and B. C. This left-reformist to centrist wing had crystallized in opposition to the rightward course of the CCF top brass largely around the party's founding programmatic statement known as the ''Regina Manifesto.'' This statement, essentially Christian pacifist, nonetheless committed the movement to public ownership of the basic means of production and to irreconcilable opposition against "Wars designed to make the world safe for capitalism."

While the ''Manifesto'' had long ceased to have any relationship at all to the completely opportunist positions to which the parliamentary caucus consistently committed the party, the CCF leadership formally decided to get rid of it. As the Ontario leadership expressed it in their provincial council minutes "the CCF should endeavor to make its appeal more pragmatic, more empirical," and should publish some new basic literature "which would restate the application of democratic socialism in today's world and in today's terms." That turned out to be the ''Winnipeg Declaration of Principles'' which dumped public ownership for public control, and replaced abolition of private profit and corporate power with the concept of social planning. This statement was jammed through the 1956 CCF Convention in Winnipeg.

The dumping of the ''Regina Manifesto'' was of course also highly agreeable to the trade union brass. The *United Autoworker* applauded the new look: "Many in organized labor will welcome the 'Winnipeg Declaration' . . . with the tag 'Socialism-Will-Cure-Everything' off its back the CCF should be ... much more acceptable to union voters."

Early in 1957 the CCF leadership, through a series of formal and informal secret discussions with the CLC brass, laid the basis for a Joint Political Action Committee, subsequently set up by the CLC 1958 convention and renamed the National Committee for the New Party. It projected a series of seminars, conferences and forums throughout the country at which CCF'ers, unionists, farmers` organizations, "professional people and other liberally minded persons" could prepare for the launching of a new party to be founded in July-August 1961.

These developments had a shattering effect on the old CCF left, which we had

concluded after many experiences was exhausted as a viable force. Many of them walked away, others talked in terms of splits, on the West Coast of tearing the BC CCF out of the federal movement, or of setting up a new socialist party.

We Trotskyists, however, saw a tremendous new opportunity opening up for us and decided to throw every ounce of energy into the debates, seminars and discussions, into every process leading to the formation of the new party, the new labor party striving to assure its being launched as a revolutionary party.

Of course, we knew that it could not be a vanguard party. But we decided to do everything possible to project our ideas into the situation, to give it a revolutionary program, to permeate it with the spirit of our transitional program.

We saw the situation confronting us as similar to that speculated upon by Trotsky around the possible developments of a labor party on this continent back in 1932.

"It is evident that the possibility of participating in and of utilizing a 'labor party' movement would be greater in the period of its inception; that is, in the period when the party is not a party but an amorphous political mass movement. That we must participate in it at that time and with the greatest energy is without question, but not to help form a 'labor party' which will exclude us and fight against us but to push the progressive elements of the movement more and more to the left by our activity and propaganda. I know this seems too simple for the new great school which searches in every way for a method to jump over its feeble head."

At that juncture the Communist Party was staggering from crisis to crisis– set off by the 20th Congress revelations of the crimes of Stalin. The anti nuclear arms struggle, the Cuban Revolution and the Black struggle in the US were stimulating new elements and moving them to the left. There was a feeling of protest developing in the ranks of organized labor against the crushing of the IWA's *(International Woodworkers` union–ed.)* organizing drive in Newfoundland and the rash of union-busting legislation.

The old alignments were breaking up –there was significant sentiment for the regroupment of socialist forces – the most notable expression the Council of Socialist Clubs in Montreal. The seminars and conferences on the new party were attracting new forces. We were actively involved in all these processes.

Formation of the NDP

We threw the pages of our press, the *Workers` Vanguard,* wide open to discussion on all the issues. We explained the need for the new party to commit itself to public ownership, why it must take a clear and unequivocal stand against the war drive. We took on every opposition, from the Stalinists who tried to scuttle its development as a class party by advocating a "democratic national coalition of patriotic forces for peace," to the sectarian critics on the sidelines who were unable to distinguish the unions from the bureaucrats, to the Galbraithians, to the would-be liquidators into the bourgeois Liberal Party. We urged

all socialists, no matter their tendency, to come in and fight for a class struggle policy and a militant leadership.

At the same time we projected the Trotskyist movement even more vigorously to the fore through fusing the Toronto-based Socialist Educational League to the Vancouver-based Socialist Information Center and launching out as the League for Socialist Action – a cross-Canada movement. We published and circulated on a big scale a simple programmatic pamphlet popularizing our transitional program and presenting ourselves as a socialist tendency whose relationship would be best expressed as an affiliate of a federated labor party.

The New Democratic Party was launched as a labor party by some 1800 voting delegates who made it the most representative working class assembly that has yet taken place in this country. The tumultuous policy debates showed the radical potential of the Canadian working class.

Our understanding of the processes at work, the implementation of our orientation, was overwhelmingly vindicated by this founding convention. The old leadership of the CCF, allied with the trade-union bureaucracy, prevailed but not without a head-on collision with a core of delegates who won such widespread support that it could only be defeated by the just elected national leader T.C. Douglas, blackmailing the delegates into submission by announcing his resignation should they adopt an anti-NATO-NORAD resolution.

The youth radicalization

For the next two or three years the tempo of NDP development continued forward at a high pitch. In Quebec in the 1965 federal elections, with practically no provincial organization and heavily marked as an English and federalist party, its vote shot up 60% to 18% in Montreal and 12% of the total vote. But increasingly it tended to move to the right, to become more structured, more bureaucratized. In 1963. a large proportion of comrades who were our most important connection with the NDP through its youth movement, were expelled.

Without doubt our greatest successes in the earlier, formative years of the NDP were in the youth arena. In 1961 while the League firmed up as an open and pan-Canadian movement, the Young Socialists dissolved their public face and entered the NDY in order to integrate their forces fully in the building of the NDP's youth movement, the New Democratic Youth, to build its left wing and to consolidate out of it a revolutionary youth cadre. In key areas of the country – Ontario and British Columbia – they provided some of the main leadership force in the NDY.

The Young Socialists recruited their first substantial forces out of the NDY and trained them in the fires of its internal struggles. Our forces faced repeated and sweeping expulsions, which we met with vigorous public defense campaigns through

which we were able each time to reconstitute our fraction - with an increased number of new recruits who, if less experienced, were nonetheless completely immersed in the process of gaining invaluable experiences.

During this process the YS launched a Trotskyist youth newspaper, and through it expanded its open activities. In 1966-67, as the ascending youth radicalization began to move past an NDY paralyzed by its right-wing leadership we withdrew from it and launched an independent Trotskyist youth organization which, from an effective point of view of intervening in the struggle, can be said to have replaced the NDY in the youth arena. At the same time as the YS carries our orientation to support the NDP propagandisticly, without doing fraction in the NDP, it is able to operate in many ways as the pro-NDP student organization.

At our 1963 convention we concluded that the formative period of the party was then ending and at the same time new opportunities to widen the base of our league not finding reflection in the NDP were opening up. We therefore decided to pay more attention to our NDP work in the trade unions and to direct more time and energy to our independent work, to build the antiwar movement, to increase the circulation of our literature, to develop our forums. One of the most significant decisions of this new stage was to step up our commitment to participation in the developing struggles in Quebec.

We began to develop the increasingly apparent possibilities for coalescing widely diverse forces behind an anti-Vietnam war movement in 1965. The work of our US co-thinkers was of tremendous value for its scope, for the movement was more limited here, its course of development in many ways has paralleled that of the US. Our "single issue" "End Canadian Complicity" strategy, fought out with all currents and tendencies in conferences across the country, has firmly established a movement that has been capable of a whole series of actions, ever renewing itself as new waves of youth enter into the struggle. While our opponents have labeled the anti-Vietnam war movement "Trotskyist," the imperialist aggression in Vietnam has evoked such response, has proven to be such a key factor in the radicalization process, that all forces, like it or not, have had to participate in its mass actions.

The anti-Vietnam war movement has been the broadest ongoing movement In decades. Only the rising women's liberation movement, with which there is an inevitable interaction, would appear to be approaching it.

Whereas the NDP and trade-Union brass first repulsed all approaches of the antiwar movement, then took a cautious, passive attitude, they have been compelled to make identity with it We gave them no peace. We buffeted them from both inside and outside and thus have helped to raise the level of an entire mass in key sectors of the Canadian working class. In the process of this ongoing and vital activity which we have carried, we have established right across the country a whole layer of comrades who are widely respected as leaders in their communities and whom the NDP and trade-union leadership have had to recognize.

At the same time as we moved out freely and independently of the NDP milieu, in keeping with the dynamic concept of our NDP orientation, our fraction reached out of its localized, contracting work areas to play a key role in the formation of province-wide socialist caucuses in the Ontario, Alberta and BC sections.

These caucuses, well under way by 1966, continued to expand on a modest basis for a couple of years until the rise of Waffle for which they prepared valuable ground-work. They played a pioneer role through their struggle against the reformist leadership in legitimatizing caucus formations in the NDP. Through their projection of a rounded alternative socialist program and in the struggle to promote it, they trained cadre and established leading figures on the left.

Our last convention prepared our movement to meet developing Canadian national sentiments which we interpreted as anti-US imperialist, leading to anti-Canadian capitalist and to class consciousness. When this burst nto the NDP with the formation of Waffle we were ready to integrate ourselves into it. With the rise and firming up of Waffle as an English-Canadian-wide force, the area of revolutionary propaganda in the NDP has been widened and the NDP has become more attractive to radicalizing youth. But Waffle is as yet to some considerable degree still outside the movement. It has not yet directed itself into the constituency organizations or towards the established union movement and so does not cause us, at this time at any rate, to make any substantial tactical adjustments in our orientation.

With the class

Our orientation to the NDP, to the labor party, is an orientation to the working class in its process of developing political consciousness. We have been firm and consistent in maintaining this orientation because we have no intention of being cut off or cutting ourselves off from the force that is destined to settle accounts with capitalist rule and establish workers power. For the period that is foreseeable ahead the working class is going to go through that experience. We intend to participate in that experience — fully. No one, nothing is going to stop us. Neither sectarians, nor opportunists—nor the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class nor their direct agents. We intend to be right in there — to expedite that experience and to assure that it moves forward to the forging of the type of instrument necessary to realize the Canadian revolution.

We are flexible in its application because the tempo of the class struggle and the maturing of the workers is vastly uneven; and it is possible — even necessary to take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself right now — to turn the relationship of forces between ourselves and the reformist leadership of the NDP to our advantage. It is necessary to build the cadre now.

(end)

End notes

In the Introduction

NDP – New Democratic Party, formed in 1961 and successor to the CCF

CCF - Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, formed in 1932 as an agrarian-based Social-democratic party

Socialist League, formed in 1974 in Toronto, ideological successor to the LSA; became known as the Forward Group in 1977

In ''Opposition to Orientation"

Third World Congress since Reunification – 1968; the third congress since the 1963 Re-unification W.C. of the Fourth International, which was founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938

VMC - Vietnam Mobilization Committee, the anti-war united front in which the LSA played a leading role in the 1960s

In ''Cannot be by-passed"

International Executive Committee (IEC) of the FI – the Fourth International grouping headed by Michel Pablo, the leading European exponent of entrism *sui generis.*

United Secretariat - Fourth International grouping including the US, Canadian and British sections in opposition to Pablo`s line, dissolved with the reunification of world Trotskyism in 1963

In ''Concept of Entry"

Bonapartist state – historical reference to the military regime thrown up in the later stages of the French Revolution straddling the contending forces of the rising bourgeoisie, the monarchist reaction and the revolutionary proletariat, i.e., a period of sustained supra-class ``dual power``

In ''Liquidationism"

The Militant – journal of the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, American section of the F.I. until 1980

Pseudonyms

Grenier: Jean-Marie Bédard

McAlpine: Ken Sutherland

Pablo: Michel Raptis, veteran Greek F.I. leader

Rose: Joe Rosenthal

(Comment for the website edition by the Web Ed. -- 2009)

This document is not only of historical interest, sketching as it does the history of the Trotskyist movement in Canada; it also expresses the most complete development of the Trotskyist orientation to the mass, mainstream independent labor political party in Canada – the only such labor party in North America – the New Democratic Party.

This document outlines the strategy that the Canadian Trotskyist movement tested and refined over 40 years in coming to grips with the challenge posed by the existence of the NDP, which from its birth as the agrarian-based CCF evolved into a mass social-democratic labor-based party, which for historical reasons has been able to position itself as the obligatory first step in the political education and mobilization of the Canadian working class. Thus, Canadian Trotskyists see the mass NDP not only as ''in the way,'' but also ''on the way'' to labor`s political development towards establishing socialism in this country – a dialectical concept that also obliges the forces of revolutionary socialism to relate to and participate closely in this party.

By 1948, in the judgement of its author Ross Dowson, the formerly agrarian-based CCF had acquired the decisive support from the Canadian union movement to be recognized as a labor party. Furthermore, with the consolidation of the major Canadian union federations' support in the ''re-branding'' of the CCF as the New Democratic Party in 1961, there was henceforth no doubt that the Canadian working class would hereby first pass through the experience of a reformist labor party on the road to workers power in this country.

However, the advantage and opportunity afforded by the existence of this mass-based parliamentarist labor party formation – first the CCF then the NDP – could be realized by a dialectical approach to the question, in recognizing the need for a strategic orientation to this mass formation which would vastly help in legitimizing revolutionary socialist ideas, particularly as applied with the powerful concept of Trotsky's Transitional Program (1938). *This is method of applying concrete demands such as nationalization of industry and resources in the context of plant closings or foreign takeover and control, or of ending Canadian complicity in US aggression throughout the world, or of womens rights to control their lives and bodies through abolition of abortion laws, etc. These transitional demands not only fulfil democratic (i.e., reformist) needs, but in reality they either cannot be fully realized without a socialist revolution nor can even serious reforms leading to partial realization of these demands be initiated without mass mobilization of the class, which is the first requisite of the march towards socialism. Most importantly, the context of raising these transitional demands before the working class within the political arena of the labor party is far more powerful than that of an labor movement reduced to begging for concessions from bourgeois parties.*

In fact, the real indirect political influence of this labor party intruder into the hallowed halls of bourgeois Parliament is much greater than the often marginal vote percentage it garners and its under-representation in terms of seats won. The NDP appears a marginal player on the federal plane but in reality this labor party is solidly in the mainstream of Canadian politics, and with the impending victory of the NDP's pressure for electoral reform – proportional representation – and the increasingly likely departure of Quebec from Confederation in a decade or two, the NDPs destiny is clearly to become a major force which will be soon thrust into power in Ottawa. Thus, a key sector of the North American working class will take power in its own name, the first step in the struggle for a socialist North America.

This document outlines this long struggle of Canadian Trotskyists for a mass orientation to the class – in reality, the obligation Canadian revolutionists must come to grips with – as well as its pitfalls and dangers to building the revolutionary vanguard – the central task facing us of rebuilding the revolutionary cadre, as the author saw it.

==J.D., January 2006